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INFORMATION REPORT

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CONFIDENTIAL

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COUNTRY Germany (Russian Zone)

SUBJECT The SED and the Church

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SUPPLEMENT TO
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- During the last week of September and the first week of October the Minister-Presidents of each of the Länder of the DDR invited the church authorities of his Land and all pastors to a conference in the respective Land capital. This action was taken in accordance with an SED directive. The subject of the conferences was the role of the church in the "peace campaign". No responsible church authorities accepted the invitation and only one to five per cent. of the pastors.
- a meeting was held in Berlin to consider the results of these conferences as reported by the Minister-Presidents and by the DDR Ministry of State Security which had also dispatched a representative to each. Present at this meeting were Otto Nuschke, Walter Ulbricht, Otto Grotewohl, and several pastors. In summing up the results of the conferences the SED leaders stated that the church has taken such a negative attitude toward the "peace campaign" that it has become a menace to this program. Nuschke and other CDU leaders had promised that they would mobilize the church behind the National Front; these promises were now characterized by the SED as extravagant, exaggerated, and false.
- Ulbricht pointed out that in West Germany the church is much more active in the peace program and that especially the leading figures of the church in the West show much more energy than in the East. Ulbricht referred to Pastor Niemöller and the 37 pastors who signed his letter to Chancellor Adenauer. Ulbricht also referred to the increasing opposition of the churches and universities in the West to the proposals for remilitarization. Ulbricht urged the East CDU to encourage this trend in the West and to gain the sympathy of these groups for the aims of the DDR. In addition he chastised the CDU for not having been able to arouse the same sentiments in the church in the DDR.

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4. After the failure of the Minder conferences it was decided that the time is not yet ripe for the establishment of a People's Church along the pattern set up in Czechoslovakia. In view of the recalcitrance of the pastors in the DDR, it is felt that such a state church would give the opponents of the DDR in West Germany a chance to accuse the DDR of being anti-church and would serve to turn the West German clergy from the "peace campaign" to the support of the West.
5. Nuschke complained that repeated anticlerical and anti-Christian statements by SED officials have made it impossible for him to gain the support of the church for the DDR. Ulbricht replied that all anti-church propaganda has been removed from the curriculum of all SED schools and training. Ulbricht claimed that this is not merely a tactical maneuver but rather an integral point of Communist theory based on experience in the USSR.
6. Nuschke was instructed to prepare a detailed program for enlisting all anti-western sentiment among Western churchmen in support of the DDR. It was suggested that an invitation to a "Peace Conference" be extended to all German pastors. The representatives of the government of the DDR also announced that the DDR is prepared to give material support to church schools.